

Councillors-elect focused on Official Plan, traffic and more

Aurora's incoming Council will see several familiar faces return to the table to represent specific wards.

Following Monday's election, five of the six incumbent Councillors secured re-election with the one new face being Sport Aurora's Ron Weese who topped the polls over long-time councillor Sandra Humfryes and rookie candidate Nick Biase.

As they prepare for the 2022-2026 term, many Councillors-elect said they were keen on steering the Town's new Official Plan, which will act as a blueprint for growth through 2051, through to completion.

WARD 1 ? RON WEESE?Thank you to the people who got me here. It was a good night,? said Weese on Tuesday morning, congratulating his two opponents on a job well done.

Ward 1, he says, has a ?diversity of interests? given its mix of older and newer communities, businesses, and its proximity to the GO Train.

?In various streets, the concern over construction of the grade separation and things and the effect that is going to have on traffic is a recurring theme,? he says of what he heard from voters at the door. ?[There were] issues related to secondary dwellings, traffic control, and kind of maintaining the way of life. Up in the upper ends of St. John's and those areas, I think I felt a lot of people interested in connecting better with the Town through the trails systems and some traffic issues there. There is a great and interesting diversity in this ward and our residents are pretty passionate about all of them. It's going to be an interesting and challenging term to work with the members of the ward.?

WARD 2 ? RACHEL GILLILAND

Councillor-elect Gilliland secured a second term over opponents Marco Di Girolamo, Daniel Lajeunesse, and Alison Connolly.

She says she is ?humbled? to be able to serve the community for the next four years and is excited to ?roll up my sleeves, start working, and continue on with the great work I have been able to start? and close the loops on issues that are yet to be resolved.

Priorities, she says, include bringing forward a motion to strengthen property standards bylaws, as well a bylaw for rental licensing, holding crime prevention town halls, and to focus on the 2023 Budget to ?ensure we align with the various master plans we are viewing or recently passed such as Active Transportation, Climate Adaptation, and Parks & Recreation. Tackling speed issues is another top priority for the ward, she adds.

?I am also looking forward to the hyper-local attention that I can give everybody in a different way and also continuing on with the Town-wide initiatives we have been working towards with a vision for the Town. I am thankful for everyone who put their trust in me, supported me, believed in me, and I am very humbled in all that. I tip my hat to everyone who put their name in the race. These elections are never easy but, at the same time, very respectfully everyone did a fantastic job with their campaign and I wish them all the best.?

WARD 3 ? WENDY GAERTNER

Long-time councillor Wendy Gaertner secured a sixth mandate from voters over challengers Harold MacDonald, Alexandra Bonham, and Owen Heritage.

Speaking to The Auroran at Town Hall as the election results came in, Gaertner said she ?really likes representing the residents,? and is focused on environmental protection and combatting traffic in the Ward.

"The Official Plan [is a priority] with environmental protection and all the green initiatives," she said. "I have a motion that passed Council about protecting the trees and looking at all the policies and bylaws that protect trees and trying to strengthen that protection in the Official Plan so it can be brought forward into action.

"I have a motion on construction in neighbourhoods and things like garbage, noise, vehicles just disrupting the neighbourhoods. I'm not just talking about Highland, but when they're doing new housing in established neighbourhoods. I think our bylaws need to be straightened as to what is allowed and what is not."

WARD 4 ? MICHAEL THOMPSON

Michael Thompson secured a fourth term from Ward 4 voters after first being elected in 2010.

While he said the last couple of weeks leading up to election were "nerve-wracking" he was glad to have the opportunity to engage with "and represent " residents at the grassroots level.

"For a lot of people, it's development, it's Archerhill that's a current issue," said Thompson on Monday night of his top priorities for when Council convenes in November. "There are a lot of local, neighbourhood issues. It is speeding on the streets, it was street lighting, parking, so I think that is the one area where, in the ward system now, it will enable myself and others to work at a much more grassroots level with the residents to be able to address some of these issues.

"I think we need to finish off the Official Plan and provide that framework and direction. It also puts a freeze on any amendments to do the Official Plan for a two-year period, so I think it is first and foremost. The other is the Budget. I think that there are a number of pressures on the Budget with regards to inflation [and] I am sure that is going to be one of the most challenging tasks as soon as we sit back down."

WARD 5 ? JOHN GALLO

In the tightest and most crowded Council race, incumbent John Gallo came out on top in Ward 5 with 602 votes to Mae Khamissa's 514. Placing third was Steve Fleck with 424, followed by Robert Lounds with 231, and Ian Clark with 219.

"I am humbled by the experience; there are some amazing candidates in Ward 5 and any one of us would have done a great job," he said. "I am lucky to be there and work hard to make sure we make Ward 5 in Aurora the best it can be."

His experience, he said, was something that resonated with voters at the door and they were "looking for someone to continue."

His top priority, he said, is "to do a better job in working with my Council colleagues to try and be on the same page."

"I have some hope that we can work better together and I am committed to seeing how I can do better to be more collaborative," he said. "The next big thing is the Official Plan and the Parks and Recreation [Master Plan] is going to be a big one for me. The first year of the next Council will deal with the Budget for the next four years and I want to pay close attention to that."

WARD 6 ? HAROLD KIM

Incumbent Harold Kim, who served as Town's Deputy Mayor in the last term of Council, will represent Ward 6. He secured 801 votes to Greg Smith's 198 and Robert James Fraser's 105.

"They ran a great campaign," says Kim, "and I want to congratulate them on a very well-run campaign."

As he went door-to-door, Kim says Ward 6 residents were engaged on development in the Leslie Street corridor and several new businesses coming into the area.

?They wanted to make sure Council puts to developers what type of tenants they would like to have,? he says. ?Mind you, Council doesn't have a say in that necessarily, but when owners are listening, we can certainly put in some recommendations. The other urgent matter for local residents is adjacent developments. I think the biggest thing on their minds is Halladay Drive with a six-storey residential complex that is going up. That is something that Council and public planning rejected. It's at OLT and that is something that local residents in Ward 6 have on their radar so I need to make sure they're updated in a timely fashion with accurate information.?

He is also focused on seeing the completion of the Town Square redevelopment.

?We need to make sure everything is on schedule.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter